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RE: Docket Number PY-02-006, 68 FR 22690, April 26, 2004

“Proposed Rule to Exempt Organic Producers and Marketers from Assessment by Research and Promotion Programs”.

Please accept my comments to this proposed rule,

While the idea of Commodity Assessment for Organic Farmers is a good one this legislation is fatally flawed and must be rewritten to accurately reflect the intent of Congress to exempt organic producers from conventional promotion packages.

This exemption has been a priority for the 600+ Farmer Members of Organic Valley for a long time. As the reality of this exemption worked its way through the system the farmers grew increasingly optimistic of attaining their goals. Unfortunately the way this rule is written, particularly the language regarding marketing only 100% organic product, most of our farmers would not qualify for exemption even though they manage and market as 100% certified organic operations.

Organic producers should be exempt from the assessments on the organic commodities they produce even if other commodities are not sold as organic. There are many reasons why an organic farmer may find it necessary to sell crops on the conventional market. That fact must not jeopardize an organic farmer's exemption status on what is marketed as organic.

Another problem with this rule as it is written is the requirement for annual application. This requirement is overburdensome and unnecessary.

I urge you to rewrite this Rule allow organic commodities to be truly exempt from Promotion Program assessments.

Thank you for your attention to these comments

Jim

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